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# State of Utah

## DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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### Division of Wildlife Resources

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July 30, 2008

**TO:** Regional Wildlife Advisory Councils  
**FROM:** Tom Aldrich  
Migratory Game Bird Program Coordinator  
**SUBJECT:** Waterfowl Season Recommendations

The results of this year's North American Duck Breeding Pair Survey and May Pond Survey have been released and generally indicate poorer habitat conditions and decreased duck breeding populations from last year.

Overall, the total pond estimate (a measure of habitat quantity) was 37% lower than last year and 10% lower than the long-term average.

The total duck breeding population estimate decreased 9% from 2007 but was 11% above the long-term average. Abundances of Northern shovelers, gadwalls, green-winged teal and redheads were all above their population objectives. Scaup and pintail however remain well below their long-term averages and population objectives.

Canada goose breeding populations and production in Utah decreased from last year and remain below the long-term average. The Rocky Mountain Population (RMP) as a whole, however, continues to do well through out its entire range, and remains well above the population objective. The Division is not recommending any changes in Canada goose seasons.

White goose populations in the Pacific Flyway continue to do well and exceeded 1 million geese during the December survey in 2007. In response to growing populations, and to increasing agricultural damage complaints, the Division is recommending extending the white goose season into March, and increasing the daily bag to 10/day. Most state Waterfowl Management Areas and Federal Refuges will be closed to the spring season to protect nesting Canada geese with the exception of Clear Lake, Public Shooting Grounds and Salt Creek WMA's where there is some opportunity to harvest white geese. The rest of the Waterfowl Management Areas and Federal Refuges have very little use by white geese but do have substantial numbers of Canada geese that could be affected by disturbance of a spring hunt.

General season duck harvest frameworks are driven by the status of mallard breeding populations. In 2008, a Western Mallard Harvest Strategy was implemented to determine harvest regulations in the Pacific Flyway. Based on mallard population data in 2008, the "Liberal" season package is being recommended by the Pacific Flyway Council. Pintail, canvasback, and scaup regulations are determined by species specific harvest strategies. Based on 2008 status information, the Pacific Flyway Council is recommending a 107 day pintail season and bag limit of 1, an 86 day scaup season with a bag of 2, and a closed canvasback season. These recommendations have not been approved by the USFWS and could possibly change. If any changes occur, the Division will bring a modified set of regulation proposals to the RAC's.



Page 2  
July 30, 2008  
Subject:

Swan populations continue to do well and the Division is not recommending any changes to swan harvest regulations.

Other Proposed Changes in 2008:

- 1) Change waterfowl youth day to September 20, to avoid conflicts with other season openers
- 2) Change shooting hours on the pheasant opener (Nov 1) to ½ hour before sunrise

Proposed Changes for Swans in 2009 (We are asking the RACs to take action on these this year)

- 1) Allow group applications for up to 4 hunters
- 2) Implement preference points for swan drawings
- 3) Reserve 15% of the permits for youth hunters (under 16 years of age)
- 4) Move the application period for swans to September after the Wildlife Board meeting

**Specific season and bag recommendations for the 2008 Utah waterfowl season are as follows:**

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Duck Season     | Oct 4-Jan 17 Statewide,<br>Scaup Oct 4-Dec 27 (or Max)<br>Canvasback-Closed (or Max)                          |
| Duck Bag        | 7, 2 hen mallards, 1 pin, 2 reds, 0 cans,<br>2 scaup (or Max)   |
| Coots           | Same as duck season, 25 daily   |
| Goose season    |   |
| Canada          | Oct 4-Jan 17, Northern Zone<br>Oct 4-Oct 16, and Oct 25 - Jan 25, Rest of State                               |
| White Geese     | Oct 25-Jan 17, Feb 18-March 10, Northern Zone<br>Oct 13-Jan 17, March 2-10, Rest of State                     |
| Goose Daily Bag | 3 dark, 10 white  |
| Snipe Season    | Oct 4-Jan 17, 8 daily   |
| Swan Season     | Oct 4-Dec 14, GSL Area, 2000 permits  |
| Shooting Hours  | ½ b. sunrise-sunset, 8:00 am opener SL, Davis, Weber, BE,<br>Cache Co's, ½ b. sunrise-sunset Nov 1 (Pheasant) |
| Youth Day       | Sept. 20, ducks, coots, geese   |
| Falconry        | Season same as gun, bag 3   |